

Social Security, and doing all of the important things we need to do. Let us get past this investigation and do the work of the great American people.

□ 2310

A CALL FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF MALTREATMENT OF PERSONNEL IN THE U.S. NAVY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURR of North Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) is recognized for the remainder of the time until midnight.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I come before you today to bring to your attention a disturbing pattern of conduct that has taken place in the United States Navy. My constituent, Lt. Commander Sheryl Washington, who is in the gallery, is a victim of an effort by the U.S. Navy to stifle the voices of those who dare to bring to the surface the maltreatment of those who serve our Nation.

Lt. Commander Washington is an 18-year veteran of the Navy. She has been brought up on charges and an administrative separation proceeding because she supposedly refused to appear for duty. Such administrative proceedings are used to remove persons from military service. Lt. Commander Washington was absent from duty because she was convalescing following a serious automobile accident. Her commander claims she did not contact him during this time. However, Lt. Commander Washington has phone records which clearly disprove this charge.

Lt. Commander Washington was found to be medically disabled by both military and civilian physicians. In total, Lt. Commander Washington was absent for about 3 weeks, from November 12, 1996, to December 2, 1996. She was excused from duty by the military physician from November 15 through the 22nd, as well as November 27th through December 2nd. Ironically, it is this excused period of time that is the basis of the action taken against her, as opposed to the entire 3 weeks of her absence.

I ask Members, how is it possible that a person can be brought up on charges of misconduct for only part of the time that they are absent, and such absence has been justified by military medical personnel? Maybe someone can answer that question. I certainly do not have the answer. It does not seem logical to me.

I question the judgment of Navy personnel in the handling of this matter because, as I indicated earlier, their logic is severely flawed. A period of absence is authorized or it is unauthorized. It cannot be both. I ask the Navy, was Lt. Commander Washington's absence authorized or unauthorized? I state, it cannot be both.

Furthermore, Lt. Commander Washington has submitted to a polygraph examination, which she passed, but for

some reason the witnesses whom the Navy is relying upon have not agreed to take a polygraph examination. Does the Navy have a double standard? It appears so to me and to others.

While stationed at Miramar Naval Base, Lt. Commander Washington became aware of the fact that an African American woman who was also stationed there had been gang-raped and sexually assaulted. Both Washington and the rape victim were assigned to the rehabilitation center. Although senior people in the chain of command were aware of what was happening to this young woman, no action was taken by the admiral or any other officers in charge, and this admiral's name is Admiral Marsh.

Perhaps the officers at Miramar thought the rape of this woman was justifiable punishment because she had the audacity to let it be known that she believed that there had been a misappropriation of equipment and supplies by those in charge, knowledge which this young lady was told to keep to herself. Maybe that is why the powers that be did not think twice about the safety of this woman, because they assigned to her an all male barracks which had no privacy nor any sense of security.

This tragic rape of this young woman occurred in 1992, and no investigation took place until 1994, when a naval chaplain, Chaplain Willy Williams, had the courage to reveal what had happened to a reporter, who then reported the story on the evening news.

Lieutenant Commander Washington had previously reported her knowledge of these events to a chaplain, a previous chaplain at a naval base she was later assigned to in the area. It was her sense that this prior chaplain was aware of this misconduct, but was unwilling or afraid to do anything. It was not until the later chaplain, Chaplain Williams, came forward that an investigation commenced, 2 years after this tragic event happened to this young lady at Miramar.

It is ironic, bitter irony, that Admiral Marsh, who was in charge of the investigation into Lt. Commander Washington's conduct, is the same officer who is in charge of the Navy Alcohol Rehabilitation Center at Miramar Naval Base in San Diego, where Washington was stationed from 1991 to 1993, the same person, Admiral Marsh.

When Washington reported what she considered to be racist conduct by the commanding officer at Miramar, she was quickly transferred without notice. The recent investigations initiated, Mr. Speaker, at Great Lakes Training Center, located in the Chicago area, are yet another manifestation of the Navy's insensitivity to our service personnel.

Investigators have been sent to review recruitment and training policies amidst allegations of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, improper relations between instructors and recruits, as well as an overall climate of

hostility and intimidation. It is obvious from the events that have taken place that the U.S. Navy is more concerned with saving face than ensuring the integrity of our military system.

Upon learning of such, it is obvious that no lessons were learned by the Navy from the Tailhook scandal. It keeps going on and on and on, these allegations of sexual harassment, improper relations, discrimination, intimidation by superior officers.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely, honestly believe in the essence of my soul that this situation surrounding Lt. Commander Washington and the brutal attack on naval female personnel, person, at Miramar deserves an immediate investigation.

□ 2320

The careers of stellar officers have been tarnished because of an environment of fear and forced silence is being perpetuated by the United States Navy. I am saddened by this, but we must all stand up, because if our military system cannot respect the lives of those who serve us, then they cannot truly serve and protect our Nation.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURR of North Carolina). The Chair must remind all Members that under clause 8 of rule XIV, it is not in order to introduce or otherwise recognize or call attention to persons in the gallery.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. MYRICK (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of a death in the family.

Mr. BATEMAN (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness.

Mr. GILCREST (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today and May 13 on account of official business.

Mr. SKAGGS (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness.

Ms. KILPATRICK (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for Tuesday and Wednesday, May 12 and 13, on account of personal business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KLING, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EDWARDS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SNYDER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ALLEN, for 5 minutes, today.